



## **Effect of Humour in Television Commercials on Brand Knowledge, Attitude and Purchase Intentions Among Fast Moving Consumer Goods (Detergent) Consumers in Lagos**

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### **Abstract**

*Humour is increasingly employed in advertising to capture attention, reduce resistance, and build favourable brand associations. In competitive, fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) markets such as Nigeria, where detergent brands compete for loyalty, understanding the role of humour in shaping consumer responses is critical. However, empirical evidence on its effectiveness in African contexts remains limited. This study examines the effect of humour in television commercials on brand knowledge, consumer attitude, and purchase intention among homemakers in Lagos, Nigeria. The research aimed to determine whether humour appeals enhance awareness and attitudes toward a detergent brand and whether these effects extend to actual buying behaviour. Drawing on the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), the study employed a quasi-experimental 1 × 3 factorial design. A*



*total of 384 homemakers, selected from a population of 2.3 million women aged 25–55 in Lagos using Cochran's formula, participated. Respondents, divided into three groups, were exposed to 60-second humour-based commercials for ELDEE, a fictitious detergent brand created for this study. Data were collected through structured online questionnaires distributed via WhatsApp and analysed using regression. Findings revealed that humour significantly improved brand knowledge ( $\beta = 0.596$ ,  $t = 6.241$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and positively influenced consumer attitudes ( $\beta = 1.430$ ,  $t = 11.651$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). However, humour had no significant effect on purchase intention ( $\beta = -0.583$ ,  $t = -1.684$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). The study recommends integrating humour with rational, value-driven appeals to convert favourable perceptions into buying behaviour.*

**Keywords:** *Brand Knowledge, Consumer Attitude, Fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), Humour Advertising appeal, Purchase intention.*

## **Introduction**

Creating advertising content that captures consumer attention and influences purchasing decisions has become increasingly complex in today's highly competitive market. Advertisers now rely on strategic techniques, particularly advertising appeals, to effectively communicate product benefits. Huhmann and Albinsson (2025) define advertising appeal as a communication strategy that helps consumers understand how a product benefits them. Similarly, Riana et al (2024) emphasise that appeals shape the emotional and cognitive connections that consumers form with brands, forming the thematic core of marketing efforts.

Ajilore and Arowa (2022) outline four core communicative powers of advertising: stopping power (grabbing attention), locking power (embedding messages in memory), feeling power (eliciting emotions), and moving power (driving action). Achieving these requires a deep understanding of consumer psychology. As Jaiswal (2021) and Ogilvy (Ogilvy & Parker, 2004) highlight, persuading the human mind demands thoughtful, research-driven communication.



Among various appeals, humour has gained prominence due to its emotional resonance and memorability. Yousef, Rundle-Thiele, and Dietrich (2023) assert that humour enhances recall, brand recognition, and consumer engagement. Du et al. (2025) further explain that humour in advertisements boosts attention and positive attitudes toward the product, making it one of the most frequently used emotional appeals globally.

However, humour's effectiveness must align with broader brand objectives. Nuweihed and Trendel (2024) argue that advertising-driven brand recognition is essential for building brand equity, which starts with awareness and evolves through cognitive associations linked to the brand name. Mecredy, Stocchi, and Feetham (2025) stress that understanding consumer behaviour and psychological responses is critical before deploying such appeals.

Despite humour's widespread use, its long-term impact on brand loyalty and sustained purchase intention, especially in the FMCG sector, remains underexplored. To address this gap, the current study employed a quasi-experimental design using a 60-second humorous television commercial for *ELDEE*, a detergent brand, targeting homemakers in Lagos. The research aimed to assess how humour in television commercials influenced brand knowledge, attitudes, and purchase intentions in a vital consumer segment responsible for household buying decisions. Objectives

1. evaluate the effect of humour in television commercials on level of knowledge of ELDEE detergent among home makers in Lagos, Nigeria;
2. assess how exposure to humour in television commercials for ELDEE detergent influence the brand attitude among home makers in Lagos, Nigeria;
3. Investigate whether humorous television commercials increase the purchase intentions for ELDEE detergent among home makers in Lagos, Nigeria.



## **Hypotheses**

H0<sub>1</sub>: Humour television commercials does not significantly affect the level of knowledge of ELDEE detergent among consumers in Lagos after exposure to the commercials.

H0<sub>2</sub>: Exposure to humorous television commercials for ELDEE detergent does not significantly influence the brand attitude among home makers in Lagos, Nigeria.

H0<sub>3</sub>: Humorous television commercials for ELDEE detergent do not significantly affect the purchase intentions of home makers in Lagos, Nigeria

## **Review of Related Literature**

### **Concept and Types of Humour in Advertising**

Humour has become an integral tool in modern advertising, especially in television commercials, where it is widely used to attract attention and connect emotionally with audiences. Research reveals that humour is found in approximately 30% of radio ads, 27% of TV ads, and 5% of magazine advertisements. According to Weinberger and Gulas (2021) and Eisend (2018), humour is an effective means of enhancing brand awareness, creating recognition, and triggering positive emotional reactions such as laughter. While humour can generate favourable responses and promote recall, it is not without its limitations. Davis and Dacin (2022) caution that humour may lead to distraction or rapid “wear out” if misaligned with the product or poorly executed.

Researchers have emphasized the need to balance humour’s entertainment value with its brandrelated message. When humour becomes the focal point, the brand may be overshadowed—an outcome referred to as the “vampire effect.” As Colamatteo et al. (2024) suggest, humorous content should be relevant and appropriate to the product’s nature to be effective. Humour functions through three theoretical lenses: the Cognitive Model, which emphasizes humour’s ability to capture attention and stimulate deeper processing; the Affective Model, which highlights emotional responses; and the Integrative Model, which combines



cognitive engagement with emotional appeal to shape consumer attitudes (Mardhatilah et al., 2024).

Ali, Rahman, and Parvaiz (2020) describe humour as a universal and recognizable phenomenon that can be categorized into conceptual, theoretical, and practical types. Taecharungroj and Nueangjamnong (2015) recommend that advertisers carefully select the right type of humour for their brand context. Based on Reick's classification system, Koneska et al. (2017) identify several humour types used in advertising: comparison, personification, exaggeration, pun, sarcasm, silliness, surprise, black humour, and blue humour.

This study focuses on five key types of humour:

1. **Comparison** – Contrasting elements to produce comic effect, such as Airtel's "freedom of choice" ad.
2. **Exaggeration** – Amplifying scenarios beyond reality, like Wendy's tilting car ad.
3. **Pun** – Playing with words to create dual meanings, e.g., Absolut Vodka's "absolute masterpiece."
4. **Personification** – Attributing human qualities to objects, as seen in Sunlight's animated detergent ad.
5. **Sarcasm** – Using caustic wit, such as Glo's Mama Gee and Sola Sobowale exchange.

Each of these humour types, when appropriately applied, can significantly enhance an advertisement's memorability, appeal, and effectiveness. However, advertisers must remain mindful of cultural sensitivity, audience diversity, and product suitability. When used with strategic intent and creative insight, humour remains one of the most versatile and impactful tools in the advertiser's toolkit

## **Empirical Review**



## **Humour Appeal, Attitude and Purchase Decisions**

Humour in advertising has consistently been recognised as a strategic tool for attracting consumer attention, shaping attitudes, and influencing purchase decisions. Recent empirical studies confirm its effectiveness, while also highlighting the contextual and cultural nuances that influence its impact.

Eisend (2022) using survey research method, conducted a large-scale investigation involving 601 respondents using structural equation modelling and meta-analytic techniques. The study found that humour significantly reduces counter-arguments and enhances favourable attitudes toward advertising. This finding supports the notion that humour functions as a persuasive mechanism by lowering resistance and generating positive affect, which subsequently strengthens brand evaluations.

Extending this perspective, Waqar (2020) adopting a survey research method, examined mobile users in Pakistan and reported that 90% of the 127 participants perceived humour as directly influencing their purchase decisions. This aligns with Senthilkumar and Venkatesh's (2015) literature review and survey of 250 consumers, which confirmed humour's dual function: it improves attention and likability while simultaneously enhancing recall and persuasion. Such findings highlight the cognitive and affective functions of humour in shaping consumer responses.

Similarly, Stathopoulou et al. (2017) demonstrated that humour can serve as a buffer against negative brand perceptions. Their mixed-methods study, involving 259 participants, demonstrated that humorous content can distract consumers from weak brand arguments, thereby enhancing engagement. Koneska, Teofilovska, and Dimitrieska (2017) further observed that among North Macedonian consumers, humour is most persuasive when tied directly to product features, especially in low-involvement or emotion-driven purchases. Lee (2015) provided experimental evidence from Taiwan that different types of humour (affective, cognitive, and social) improve message comprehension, brand perception, and recall. These findings support



the role of humour in transferring positive emotional associations from the advertisement to the brand.

In African contexts, the role of humour has been studied in both Nigeria and Egypt. Ifeanyichukwu and Aghara (2019) conducted a survey of 323 consumers in Anambra State, revealing that humour elements such as surprise and wordplay were particularly effective in influencing purchases, while imagery-based humour had a limited impact. Surprise emerged as the strongest predictor of buying behaviour. Similarly, Moussa and Marwa (2021) found in a study of 400 Egyptian consumers that humour enhances brand recall and recognition, which then mediates purchase decisions. Their work underscores humour's indirect but consequential role in shaping consumer behaviour through brand awareness.

Using survey research method, research in Malaysia by Kovindasamy and Ogundare (2017) echoed these findings, showing that humour advertising significantly influences consumer perceptions of brand quality and presentation. More recent studies extend this insight: Liang and Lin (2023) confirmed that humour facilitates thoughtful brand evaluation, which has a positive impact on purchase intention. Subagio (2021) emphasised that while humour increases visibility, its effect on purchase requires reinforcement through product value communication, cultural relevance, and endorsements.

Emerging scholarship situates humour within culturally specific advertising strategies. Adebisi and Akinola (2020) noted in Lagos that humour improves attention and recall but may not independently drive purchase decisions unless paired with persuasive content. Ekanem and Okoro (2021) found that humour in Nigerian commercials fosters brand recall, but it is most effective when audiences perceive it as authentic and culturally grounded.

Overall, empirical evidence confirms that humour enhances consumer attitudes and brand evaluations by generating enjoyment and reducing resistance. However, the link between humour and purchase intention is less straightforward. While humour fosters awareness and recall, it requires alignment with product value propositions, credibility cues, or price incentives to translate into actual purchase behaviour (Weinberger & Gulas, 2021; Davis & Dacin, 2022). Thus, humour remains a powerful yet complementary tool that must be strategically integrated into advertising campaigns.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This study is underpinned by the Elaboration Likelihood Model of persuasion (ELM) and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) to explain the impact of humour in television commercials



on brand knowledge, attitude, and purchase intention. Developed by Richard Petty and John Cacioppo (1986), the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) proposes two routes to persuasion: the central route, which involves thoughtful consideration of message content, and the peripheral route, where cues like humour influence attitudes with minimal cognitive effort. It is a hypothesis that explains how persuasion occurs and the strength of attitudes formed has been used in advertising research to explain brand attitudes and advertising performance (Akashoro, 2013). In this study, humour functions as a peripheral cue, enhancing brand recall and positive attitude among homemakers without necessitating profound message processing. In the same vein, the Theory of Planned Behaviour, a psychological framework developed by Icek Ajzen and Martin Fishbein (1991), explains how behavioural attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control shape intentions Solo-Anaeto (2016) note that attitude reflects personal evaluation of the behaviour; subjective norms involve perceived social pressures; while perceived behavioural control refers to one's belief in their ability to perform the behaviour. Although humour improves brand knowledge and attitude, its lack of significant impact on purchase intention suggests that other factors, such as social pressure or affordability, play stronger roles in actual buying decisions. Together, ELM and TPB provide a robust framework for understanding the varying cognitive and behavioural outcomes of humour.

## **Methodology**

This study employed a quasi-experimental design to examine causal relationships between variables. Rogers and Révész (2019) define quasi-experiments as studies where an intervention is deliberately introduced to observe its effect. A hybrid of the post-test-only and factorial design was adopted, eliminating the need for a pre-test, as the focus was on participants' reactions to ELDEE, a fictitious detergent brand created for the study. Using a 1 x 3 factorial design, one independent variable-advertising appeal-was tested in three formats: Pun, Exaggeration, and Comparison. These humour-based television commercials served as treatments to assess their effect on knowledge, attitude, and purchase intention

Tabulated Factorial Design for the Study



S/N	Groups	Treatment	Post-Test
1.	Experimental Group 1	Humour TVC with Pun only	Examined
2.	Experimental Group 2	Humour TVC with Comparison	Examined
3	Experimental Group 3	Humour with Exaggeration only	Examined

Source: Researcher’s Tabulated Factorial Design, 2024

The study targeted 2,333,270 women aged 25–55 in Lagos, identified as key household decision-makers for low-cost products. To determine the sample size for this study, Cochran’s (1977) statistical formula was employed, resulting in a total of 384 participants. The formula is illustrated as follows:

**Cochran's Basic Formula** (for large populations):

$$n_0 = (Z^2 * p * q) / e^2$$

Where:

- Z = 1.96 for 95% confidence level
- p = 0.5 (maximum variability when unknown)
- q = 1 - p = 0.5
- e = margin of error

Finite Population Correction:

$$n = n_0 / (1 + (n_0 - 1)/N)$$

Example Calculation (e = 0.05):

1.  $Z^2 = 1.96 \times 1.96 = 3.8416$
2.  $p \times q = 0.25$
3.  $e^2 = 0.0025$
4.  $n_0 = (3.8416 \times 0.25) / 0.0025 = 384.16$
5. Finite correction:  
 $(n_0 - 1) / 2,333,270 \approx 0.0001643$   
 $n = 384.16 / 1.0001643 \approx 384.10$



Final sample size **n = 384**

This sample was evenly divided into three experimental groups, each comprising 128 participants. The sample size aligns with Creswell and Creswell's (2017) recommendation that experimental studies can produce valid results without requiring large samples. A purposive sampling technique was used to select female residents of Lagos aged 25 to 55 who met specific criteria: possession of at least a high school certificate, ownership of internet-enabled mobile phones, active WhatsApp usage, and residency in households with at least two people. Contact details were obtained from Stylus Tech Options, a data service provider.

### **Intervention Process**

Participants were added to WhatsApp groups, where researcher-developed video commercials uploaded to YouTube were shared weekly over a four-week intervention period. Each 60-second commercial rotation was shown three times and lasted approximately three minutes. In the fifth week, a structured questionnaire was administered online via Google Forms, which was shared on the same WhatsApp platforms. Trained research assistants monitored the process and issued reminders. To ensure controlled access, WhatsApp's 24-hour disappearing message feature was activated. Participation was voluntary, with the freedom to withdraw at any point. The postintervention questionnaire assessed participants' knowledge, attitudes, and purchase intentions regarding ELDEE detergent, effectively capturing the campaign's impact.

### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

Test of Hypothesis 1

**H<sub>0</sub>: Humour in television commercials does not significantly affect the level of knowledge of ELDEE detergent among consumers in Lagos after exposure to the commercials.**

Table 2.1: Model Summary of Test of effect of humour in the commercial on the level of knowledge of ELDEE detergent among consumers in Lagos after exposure to the commercial

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	925.589	1	925.589	38.950	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	9695.621	408	23.764		
	Total	10621.210	409			
R = .295 R Square = .087 Adjusted R Square = .085						

Table 2.1.1a: Showing the effect of humour in the commercial on the level of knowledge of ELDEE detergent among consumers in Lagos after exposure to the commercial

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	25.096	1.125		22.302	.000
	Humour in the Commercial	.596	.095	.295	6.241	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Knowledge of Detergents						

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2024

Tables 2.1 and 2.1a show that humour in the commercial significantly increased consumers' knowledge of ELDEE detergent in Lagos ( $\beta = 0.596$ ,  $t = 6.241$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ;  $r = 0.295$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), explaining 8.7% of the variance. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected.

**H0<sub>2</sub>: Exposure to humorous television commercials for ELDEE detergent does not significantly influence the brand attitude among home makers in Lagos, Nigeria.**

Table 2.2: Model Summary of Test of effect of humour in the commercial on the attitude of consumers towards ELDEE detergent in Lagos after exposure to the commercial

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5370.515	1	5370.515	135.744	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	16300.200	412	39.564		
	Total	21670.715	413			
R = .498 R Square = .248 Adjusted R Square = .246						

Source: Researcher Field Survey, 2024 Table 2.2a: Showing the effect of humour in the commercial on attitude of consumers towards ELDEE detergent in Lagos after exposure to the commercial

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	17.399	1.445		12.036	.000
	Humour in the Commercial	1.430	.123	.498	11.651	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Attitude Towards Detergent						

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2024

Tables 2.2 and 2.2a reveal that humour in the commercial significantly influenced consumers' attitudes toward ELDEE detergent in Lagos ( $\beta = 1.430$ ,  $t = 11.651$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ;  $r = 0.498$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), explaining 24.8% of the variance. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected.

H0<sub>3</sub>: Humorous television commercials for ELDEE detergent do not significantly affect the purchase intentions of home makers in Lagos, Nigeria Table 2.3: Model Summary of Test of effect of humour in the commercial on home makers' intention to purchase ELDEE detergent in Lagos after exposure to the commercial

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4543.735	1	4543.735	2.836	0.093
	Residual	660193.682	412	1602.412		
	Total	664737.417	413			
R = .109 R Square = 0.007 Adjusted R Square = .004						

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2024

**Table 2.3a: Showing the effect of humour in the commercial on home makers' intention to purchase ELDEE detergent in Lagos after exposure to the commercial**

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	5.999	2.789		2.151	0.032
	Humour in the Commercial	-0.583	0.346	0.083	-1.684	0.093
a. Dependent Variable: Consumer Intention to Purchase						

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2024

Tables 2.3 and 2.3a show that humour in the commercial had a negative, non-significant effect on consumers' purchase intention for ELDEE detergent ( $\beta = -0.583$ ,  $t = -1.684$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ;  $r = 0.109$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), explaining only 0.7% of variance. Thus, the null hypothesis was accepted.



## Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study show that humour in the ELDEE television commercials significantly enhanced brand knowledge and consumer attitudes but did not have a corresponding effect on purchase intention. Regression results indicated that humour explained 8.7% of the variance in knowledge and 24.8% in attitude, affirming humour's persuasive strength as an attention-grabbing and memory-enhancing appeal. These outcomes support Weinberger and Gulas (2021), who argue that humour increases recall and emotional resonance, and Du et al. (2025), who emphasize that humour heightens positive brand associations through peripheral persuasion.

However, the non-significant effect of humour on purchase intention ( $\beta = -0.583$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) challenges assumptions that favourable attitudes naturally translate into buying behaviour. This aligns with Hagger et al. (2022), who note that behavioural intention is shaped not only by attitudes but also by social norms and perceived control, as posited by the Theory of Planned Behaviour. In Nigeria, factors such as affordability, entrenched brand loyalty, and cultural perceptions may override humour's influence on actual purchasing. Local studies echo this gap: Adebisi and Akinola (2020) found that while humour drew attention in Lagos adverts, it rarely triggered purchase, while Oluwafemi and Adeola (2019) highlighted cultural nuances that mediate humour's effectiveness. This divergence between attitude and behaviour also resonates with Davis and

Dacin's (2022) "vampire effect," which cautions that while humour entertains, it may distract from the product's functional benefits. Nigerian research further confirms that humour must be relevant and tied to brand value propositions to avoid being dismissed as mere entertainment (Ekanem & Okoro, 2021). Thus, this study contributes to literature by confirming humour's efficacy in awareness and attitude formation while extending debates on its limitations in shaping purchase intention. For Nigerian FMCG marketers, the implication is clear: humour should be deployed strategically, complemented by rational, culturally attuned messaging to convert positive perceptions into buying decisions.

## Conclusions

This study concludes that humour in television commercials is a powerful tool for enhancing brand knowledge and shaping favourable consumer attitudes, particularly within Nigeria's FMCG sector. However, the findings reveal that humour alone does not significantly drive purchase intention, underscoring the gap between positive perception and actual buying behaviour. This suggests that while humour creates awareness and emotional connection, it must be complemented with rational, value-driven appeals such as product quality, affordability, and



endorsements to influence consumer decisions. Advertisers are therefore encouraged to adopt integrated strategies that balance humour with persuasive content to maximise effectiveness.

## **Recommendations**

- 1. Combine Humour with Value Messaging:** Advertisers should integrate humour with clear demonstrations of product benefits. While humour grabs attention and builds positive attitudes, consumers still require rational justification before making purchase decisions. Embedding humour alongside functional claims ensures that brand recall translates into purchase intention rather than remaining at the level of entertainment.
- 2. Tailor Humour to Cultural Contexts:** Marketers should design humour that resonates with local cultural values and consumer experiences. In Nigeria, shared humour rooted in everyday life enhances relatability and strengthens emotional bonds with brands. However, humour should avoid stereotypes or distractions that dilute product relevance, ensuring consumers connect enjoyment with real purchase motivation.
- 3. Blend Humour with Persuasive Appeals:** Since humour alone does not guarantee behavioural change, advertisers should blend it with other persuasive strategies such as testimonials, price incentives, or demonstrations of quality. This integrated approach ensures that humour sets a positive tone while complementary appeals provide the final push, effectively bridging the gap between attitude and purchase.

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